

Tips on Selling to and Submitting a Winning Proposal to the Army

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Topics

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2. Identify Potential Opportunities
3. Get Help
4. Read the Request for Proposal (RFP)
5. Understand the Requirement
6. Respond to the Requirement
4. Respond to ALL Factors and Subfactors
5. Submit Solutions
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Know your Product/Service

- Know your product/service. Be able to do what you say you're going to do. Poor contract performance will adversely impact your ability to gain future contracts.
- Learn what the customer needs are. Tailor your presentation to the specific customer.
- Target Army Activities that are most likely to need you product/service.



Identify Potential Opportunities

- Requirements over \$25,000 are synopsisized on Federal Business Opportunity (FedBIZ OPS) website.
- Register with the Centralized Contractor Registration (CCR).
 - Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN),
 - Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun and Bradstreet
 - Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code.



Get Help!

Call the buying activities and meet with their small business specialists.

- **They can:**
 - Help you determine if your capabilities match their customers' needs
 - Provide you with pertinent procurement information
 - Provide information on agency's latest acquisition-related initiatives.



Get Help! ... (Continued)

- **They cannot:**
 - Lobby source selection officials
 - Promise a contract
 - Provide information that cannot be released to the public
 - Help you write or review proposals to be submitted to any government agency
 - Speak for the Contracting Officer

When meeting with the Government – take the lead in discussions.



Read the RFP

- Background & Description of Project
 - If you can provide only part of the solution consider teaming arrangements
 - Look for subcontracting opportunities. Service Disabled Veterans subcontracting goals are often imposed in the RFP
- Proposal Preparation Instructions
 - “Instructions to Offerors”
- Evaluation Criteria



Understand the Requirement

- Propose the right key personnel
- Demonstrate experience with directly-related work
- Demonstrate how you will comply with the schedule
- Clearly identify how you will perform key requirements
- Connect tasks and deliverables



Respond to the Requirement

Things to keep in mind

- Focus Response
- Complete All Documentation
- Remember - Value Provided Only in Connection with Stated Evaluation Criteria
- Avoid Marketing Fluff (these may introduce ambiguities into an otherwise successful proposal)
- State what you will do - avoid words like “MAY” or “CAN”
- Don’t include Information Outside of the Factor and Subfactor (information that isn’t relative and/or necessary)



Respond to all Factors & Subfactors

- Successful proposals are not too short or too long, they follow the guidelines, and they provide a proposal response/solution for every factor and subfactor.
- Successful proposals present the material in a logical manner.



Submit Solutions!

- Provide proof regarding your superior service capabilities.
- Prove that you understand the risks, and that you've dealt with such risk before.
- Identify how you will mitigate any remaining risk(s)
- Show that your solution provides the least risk – because it is proven and consistently being improved.

A successful proposal highlights your strengths and reduces the impact of your weaknesses!



Submit Solutions ..continued

- The Evaluators and Program Managers evaluating acceptance of your proposal need to understand your plan since your performance ultimately affects them:
 - Provide them with the ammunition to speak confidently of your plan. **Make your proposal as specific as possible.** A detailed proposal with resources and deliverables demonstrates that you understand the issues, and you know how to organize the work and can deliver the goods or services.



Solution Example

- Our company will assure that the Mouse traps we provide under this contract are equipped with the latest technology and allow for flexible solutions suited to a variety of user requirements.
- We monitor rodent population reports and can anticipate increased demand. We produce 10,000 mouse traps per month and can double production within 2 weeks. New Products and advancements in mouse trap technology are evaluated by our company each quarter and added to our catalog. We have teaming agreements with XYZ, Inc. assuring we can obtain raw materials needed for production.
- Our Program Manager and teaming partners meet monthly to coordinate and adjust plans, schedules and goals so that we can meet changing customer needs. We utilize our firm's DataTracking system to monitor orders and delivery and can provide status to the Government as needed.



Experience versus Past Performance

Which one is Experience?

(A) The experience you have that is relevant to the requirements in the RFP.

(B) What your references say about your performance on previous or ongoing contracts and whether or not they'd contract with you again or recommend you for other contract opportunities.



Review Team

The purpose of your internal Review Team is to –

- Identify any typo or cross-reference errors.
- Identify any **problems, errors or omissions** connected with the solicitation requirements.
- Identify the **strengths** of the proposal.
- Identify **weaknesses** and resolutions to them.
- Assesses how the proposal stacks up against the **evaluation criteria**.
- Assesses how **persuasive, or not, the proposal is**.
- **Recommend solutions**. This is a critical element of the job. Pointing out errors is one thing, and it is the easy part.

The hard part comes when the reviewer has to come up with plausible, useful ways of resolving problems with the proposal!



What are Evaluators Looking for?

Answer: Best Value!!

- Evaluators need to be convinced that your offer provides the best value (IAW RFP evaluation criteria), because you understand the problem, your solution makes sense, you've proven that your company can do the job successfully, and you've offered a reasonable price.



Evaluators have revealed that the typical proposal problems include...

1. Proposals that are too wordy and unclear.
2. Poor proposal quality-washed out or all black and white graphics, spelling errors and typos, poor quality copying, etc.
3. Poor response to RFP requirements.
4. Poor approach to solving the problem.
5. Inherent deficiencies-missed requirements here and there, inaccuracy of data, etc.



Evaluation is a Process of Elimination)-:

Evaluating a proposal is really a process of elimination, rather than a process of selection. That's why when you write your proposal, focus on writing a proposal *that cannot be eliminated!*



Debriefings

An Opportunity to Develop a Relationship!

- Find out what the Contracting Officer and Program Manager thought when reviewing your proposal.
- Asking for a debriefing creates good will by showing the agency you are eager to learn how to improve the way you do business with them. They will look for your improvements in future proposals.



Questions for your Debriefing

- Was our proposal responsive to your needs? If not, which ones did we miss?
- Did we meet all the solicitation requirements? If not, where were we deficient?
- Did it sound like we understood your project? If not, which aspects did we come up short on?
- Did we clearly call out the benefits to you of our approach? If not, which ones did we miss?



Questions for your Debriefing

- Was our technical approach to resolving your problem adequate? If not, what was it lacking?
- Was our approach to managing the project what you were looking for? If not, how could we have improved it?
- Were our costs too high?
- Was the proposal easy to understand and follow? If not, which sections did you have trouble with?



Useful Web sites

FedBizOpps <http://www.fbo.gov>

CCR <http://www.ccr.gov>

DUNS <http://www.dnb.com/us/index.asp>

CAGE http://www.dlis.da.mil/cge_welcome.asp

NAICS <http://www.sba.gov>

SBA SubNet <http://web.sba.gov/subnet/>

PTAC <http://www.aptac-us.org/new/>

Army Small Business <http://www.sellingtoarmy.info>



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